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# Green awareness includes town trees



by **John Steele**  
chairman of  
the Horsham  
Society

MUCH is made nowadays of the green agenda, by which we mean reducing the impact humans make on the environment.

But in our rush to do our bit do we risk losing sight of the other green agenda – the threat to our urban trees and open spaces?

Stand in almost any part of Horsham and look up. Above and between the buildings you will see trees, many of them large forest trees.

Now try to imagine what the townscape would look like without them. Apart from their individual beauty, large trees serve to soften the wider urban landscape and contribute to the overall character of our town.

Like everything else, trees age and die, some are lost through development, others fall prey to house owners.

There is understandable reluctance to plant large trees in urban areas because of the risk of root damage to

neighbouring property.

But no matter how many smaller species are planted, welcome though they are, they cannot create the same beneficial impact on the streetscene.

So what can we do? First we must ensure that all trees which make a significant contribution to the streetscene are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. If in doubt, check with the council.

Second, we must try harder to identify sites suitable for new large tree planting such as open spaces, large roundabouts, and wide verges. The Horsham Society is happy

to collate ideas and pass them on to the council.

It is not only trees that are threatened, but also our urban open spaces. In 1994 the Horsham Society mapped over 80 green spaces in the town ranging in size from very large to pocket handkerchief.

Some fulfil a district-wide role, others are attractive informal areas used and admired by local residents. Very few are protected and once lost they cannot be replaced.

Council ownership unfortunately does not afford any protection as we saw last year when it planned to build

over the green in Ramsey Close.

One answer is to get the smaller areas registered as town greens under the Commons Act.

The law is complicated but broadly if a green has been used by local residents as of right (ie without permission) for sports or pastimes for a period of at least 20 years it may be registered.

Three years ago the society applied on behalf of local residents for the registration of Cootes Green in Merryfield Drive. It has been a lengthy process but hopefully we are nearly there.